

16
December 1757.

A SHORT
A C C O U N T
O F A
New S O C I E T Y

For Suppreffing
Open Vice and Immorality,
Particularly with Regard to
Profaning the LORD's DAY.



L O N D O N :
Printed in the Y E A R, MDCCCLVII.

A

Short Account of a new Society for suppressing *open Vice* and *Im- morality*, &c.

ABOUT the Year 1695, five or six Persons united together in *London*, for this Purpose, God so blessed their Endeavours, that the Undertaking was soon spread far beyond the Limits of *Great Britain*. And the Good which was done thereby in a few Years, was beyond all their Expectations. But for some Years last past, the Society for Reformation of Manners in *London* has been discontinued: Although never was there a louder Call than now, for their continuing to act with the utmost Vigour and Diligence: Whether we consider the State of Publick Affairs on the one Hand, or the overflowing of all Ungodliness on the other.

In particular, How notorious is the Profanation of the Lord's Day (the common Inlet to all other Vices) in all Parts of *Great Britain*, and more especially in and about the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*? It was in Consequence of this, that his Majesty published his Royal Proclamation, in the Year 1750, for the preventing and punishing of Vice, Profaneness and Immorality, particularly Profanation of the Lord's Day. And this was followed by a Proclamation of the Lord Mayor, strictly charging all Constables, Church-Wardens, and other Officers, diligently to search after such as should offend herein, and bring them before some Magistrate to be punished according to their Demerits. But by
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the Neglect of the said Constables, Church-Wardens, and other Officers (whose Duty it is to put the Laws in Execution) those Crimes are still committed, to the great Scandal of Religion, as well as in Defiance of the Laws of the Realm, and Contempt of the Office of the Civil Magistrate, who beareth not the Sword of Justice in vain.

One of the Crimes there particularly recited was, "The profaning the Lord's Day, by using any Sports, or Pastimes, by Tradesmen exercising the Works of their ordinary Callings, or publicly exposing to Sale any Wares or Merchandizes, or Vintners, Alehouse-keepers, Inn-keepers or Coffee-houses, by entertaining Company in their Houses on that Day."

The Proclamation adds, "And this Court doth desire and require all the Inhabitants of this City, to aid and assist in discovering, and apprehending all such Persons as shall offend herein: And if any Constable, or other Officer neglect the Duty of his Office, forthwith to give Notice of his Name, to some Magistrate, that he may be punished, as the Law directs."

Several Persons are determined, by the Grace of God, to do what is here so earnestly desired, and required of them: Namely, to aid and assist in discovering, and bringing to Justice, all that in any of these Ways profane the Lord's Day. And they invite all of every Denomination of Christians, who have any Zeal for the Honour of God, who are unwilling to have their Children, or other Relations, their Friends and Servants corrupted, who have any Love to their Country, and would, by removing a National Guilt, prevent National Judgments, to join with them in so laudable an Undertaking: That our Streets may cease to be
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turned into *Sunday* Fruit-Markets, and our Ale-houses no more be made publick Nufances, Nursaries of Vice, and Schools to train up the Common People for the Gallows. Then should we see industrious and faithful Apprentices, sober Journeymen, and honest Servants; our Work-houses thinner, and our Churches fuller; and in Consequence of this, one third of the Poor's Rate, and other Expences, with which every Parish is, at present, burthened, to the great Ease of the Inhabitants thereof.

An Abstract of the Acts of Parliament, relating to Publick Houses, and the Observation of the LORD's DAY.

Anno primo Jacobi Regis. cap. 9.

IF any Inn-keeper, Victualler, or Alehouse-keeper, permit or suffer any Person or Persons, dwelling in any City, Town, Village, or Hamlet, wherein any such Inn or Alehouse is, to remain drinking therein, other than such as shall be invited by any Traveller, and shall accompany him, during his necessary Abode there, and other than labouring and handicrafts Men, upon working Days, for one Hour at Dinner-time to take their Diet: And others than Labourers and Workmen, who for the following their Work, sojourn, lodge, or victual there: That every such Inn-keeper, Victualer or Alehouse-keeper, shall forfeit 10 s. to the Use of the Poor of the Parish, for every such Offence, proved by the Oath of two Witnesses, taken before any Justice of the Peace.

By an Act, *Anno Quarto Jac. Regis, cap. 9.* Every Person who shall be drunk, is to pay 5 s. to the Church-Wardens, for the Use of the Poor, which is to be levied by the Constables, under the Penalty of 10 s. If any Person be a second
Time

Time convicted of Drunkenness, he shall be bound to his good Behaviour, with two Sureties. And every Person who shall continue above an Hour, drinking in an Inn, Victualling-house, or Alehouse, in the same Town, Village, or Hamlet he dwells in, shall forfeit 3 s. and 4 d. to the Poor.

Anno Septimo Jacobi Regis. An Act for Reformation of Alehouse-keepers. If any Alehouse-keeper be convicted of any Offence committed against either of the preceding Act, he shall for three Years, next ensuing, be disabled from keeping any Inn or Alehouse.

Anno Vicesimo Primo Jac. Regis, Cap. 7. Where Two Witnesses were required by the former Act, this makes One sufficient: Or the voluntary Confession of the Offender. If any Person, wheresoever his Habitation is, be convicted of Tippling in any Inn, Victualing-house, or Alehouse, he shall be adjudged to be within the former Statute, as if he had dwelt where the Inn or Alehouse was.

By an Act, *Anno primo Car. I. Cap. 4.* All Keepers of Taverns, and such as sell Wine or Victuals in their Houses, are adjudged to be within the former Statutes.

Anno Vicesimo nono Carol. Secundi, Cap. 7. An Act for the better Observation of the LORD's DAY. All Persons shall observe every Lord's Day, by exercising themselves thereon in the Duties of Piety, publicly and privately. No Tradesmen, Artificer, Workmen, Labourer, or other Person whatsoever, shall do any worldly Labour, Business, or Work, of their ordinary Calling, upon the Lord's Day, or any Part thereof. Every Person offending herein, shall, for every Offence, forfeit 5 s. And no Person whatsoever, shall publicly cry, shew forth, or expose to sale, any Wares, Merchandizes, Fruits, Herbs, Goods, or Chattles whatsoever,
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on pain of forfeiting the said Goods, so cried, or exposed to sale. No Drawer, Horse-courser, Waggoner, Butcher, Higler, or any of their Servants, shall travel, or come to their Inn or Lodging, on the Lord's Day, on pain of forfeiting 20 s. Convictions are to be by One Witness, within ten Days; the Penalties to be levied by Distress.

✚ The Society meets in *St. Sepulchre's Quest-Room*, near the Church, on *Monday Evenings*, at Six o'Clock precisely.



A Word to a CONSTABLE.

S I R,

YOU as a Constable are concerned in the levying of Penalties, Execution of Warrants, &c. and are bound, on Oath, wherein you have promised the Almighty, in these awful Words, *So help me G O D*, to perform your Office.

To levy the Penalty of 3 s. and 4 d. (by 1 *Car. 1. c. 1.*) for Sports and Pastimes on the Lord's Day; that of 20 s. upon Carriers, Waggoners, Drovers, &c. travelling; and 6 s. and 8 d. (3 *Car. 1. c. 1.*) upon Butchers, killing or selling Meat upon that Day; and of 5 s. on such as exercise their Trade, or any other worldly Labour thereon. 29 *Car. 2. c. 7.* To levy the Penalty on profane Cursing and Swearing. And to receive from the Offender (or Constable) the 3 s. and 4 d. for Tippling, to the Use of the Poor. 4 *Jac. 1. c. 5.*

So soon as any Warrant comes to your Hands for the Punishment of an Offender, you are to execute it duly, without Tricks or needless Delays, and according to the strict and literal Tenor of your Precept. Your Precept tells you, you shall *demand* such a Sum as the Penalty by Law amounts to, and if the Offender will not pay, you are to *levy it by Distress and Sale of his Goods*; and if *NO Distress can be taken*, (if he really have nothing to distrain upon) you are *then* to *set him in the Stocks* for so long as the Warrant appoints. If therefore the Offender have any thing that you *can distrain*, your setting him in the Stocks is but a *false Imprisonment* (for your Warrant gives you no Authority in that Case to punish him in such a Manner; however, it is no Execution of your Warrant. Neither must you after Payment, return the Money again (or any part of it) to the Offender, for this is *Robbing the Poor*, to whom the Law has given the Penalty and every Farthing of it; it is acting contrary to your Warrant; 'tis either *not Punishing the Offender at all*, or taking upon you to *lessen* his Punishment, of which the *Law* has not made you a Judge, but only a Ministerial Officer. If for giving the Money back again you plead, that *the Offender himself* is Poor; yet because such a Management would certainly not answer the End of the *Law*, which is, to punish him by the Payment of so much Money, neither more nor less, for such an Offence you cannot justify your Disobedience to the *Law* by you illegal and impertinent Charity to the Offender: He is not to have it. Consider, how you will answer it at the Day of Judgment, if when good Laws are put in Execution by the Magistrate for the Suppression of Vice and Profaneness, you do your
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utmost to discourage and perplex that Execution of them which is entrusted upon your *Oath* with *you*, and thereby prevent, as much as in *you* lies, the Effect of those Laws, and the Reformation of Offenders, disappoint the Wishes and Endeavours of all good Men, and contribute to support and strengthen Vice, by defeating the punishment it ought to undergo.

And now, having fully and fairly represented to you the Nature of your Trust and Office, give me leave to expostulate a little with you.

Tho' Perjury be a *Horrid Sin*, yet horrid as it is, 'tis one of the *most prevailing Sins* in *England*. How many Thousand Persons have we every Year *Forsworn* in Parish Offices, as to those particulars which I have shewn to be their Duty towards the Punishment of Vice. The most of them, I am afraid, look upon their Oaths as *things of Course*, and little to be regarded; if we may judge by their Practice: For it is plain, they do not act as if they thought themselves under any Obligation from them. But, can there be any thing in the World more sacred than an OATH? Is it not a solemn Appeal to GOD for your Sincerity in what you promise? And is not that Appeal an Acknowledgment that he will punish Falshood? Nay further, is it not a *calling down* the Curse and Vengeance of God upon yourselves if you be false? Do you not, by laying your Hand upon the Gospels, declare in effect, that *you hope for no Salvation by Christ*, if you perform not, to the best of your Power, what you then promise? And do not the Words, *So help you God*, sufficiently prove, that the Intention of your Oath is so; and that you are to expect no Mercy or Favour from God, either in this World or the next, if you do not answer the Trust
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